

entwine

Kevin Michael Bielicki

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I discover new ways to experience and create space with a visual investigation of material possibilities. This deepens my knowledge and understanding of the world around me. This knowledge is built through my research and the act of making. It's an ongoing exploration that has no end because everything is ever changing. My work is not a search for something concrete; instead it aims to embrace a sense of the unknown. Jay Mesuer wrote –“It is far better to capture the glorious spirit of the sea than to paint all of its tiny ripples.”¹

My research and influences include nature, bonsai, abstract expressionism, as well as my materials, processes, and daily experiences. These influences are a source of inspiration and inform multiple aspects of my work. I've always been interested in the vast scale of nature and the universe. Even here on earth we are tiny creatures compared to large trees, mountains, and the landscapes that surround us. It's always been grounding to step back and consider how we fit within it all. This world existed long before us and the evidence of time and natural forces are everywhere. Nature surrounds us; it is us, and it connects us to one another.

For a number of years I have been immersed in the Japanese art of bonsai. These miniature trees are highly valued for their unique characteristics such as their age, movement of their trunks, their exposed roots, fractal-like branching, and deadwood all organized in a balanced composition. Some of the most prized and unique bonsai are collected in nature. These trees are revelations of the persistence of nature's ability to push forward despite many obstacles. These trees are typically

collected from mountains and have endured tough conditions like harsh weather, falling rocks, limited nutrients and poor soil conditions that contribute greatly to their form. The collected trees are refined by artists to emphasize their inherent beauty and highlight their most interesting and unique qualities.

Exposure to these trees developed my sensitivity to time and the devotion that it takes to develop art. Combining these ideas of natural and man-made patterns has led to new work. *Consummation, destruction, and desolation* (Fig. 1) is composed in steel, concrete, live moss, and live hemlock tree. This work is a long term, time based piece inspired by two intersecting types of artwork. I was inspired by a series of Thomas Cole paintings titled The Course of an Empire. This is a series of five panels that depict an imaginary place inhabited by humans and includes the possible outcomes depending on their course of action. The other draws from my interest in bonsai. Both of these forms of art depict an imaginary nature that is influenced by humans. I overlapped these two themes by depicting a miniature contained tree in which its roots are incased in concrete. Concrete is representative of the common foundational structures that are used in homes or buildings that exist on the same level as tree roots. This concrete block also represents the idea of containment found in bonsai, using earth-based materials as its vessel. Constructed on top of the concrete pad is a steel structure that extends beyond the height of the tree. On one side the tree is green and thriving and the other is more barren with broken branches and burns from welding. This emphasizes not only human influence on nature but how bonsai artists handle tree forms using metal wire to direct the branch's growth. Though the roots are encapsulated they have areas that can be watered allowing it to

grow. Overtime, the tree will take over the structure and the process will begin again. There is a dialogue that will happen between the contrasting materials. Nature will reclaim space, and in response the man-made structure could also continue over time by welding more layers to the steel structure.

Another major influence to my work is the investigation of material processes. I understand my work through material investigations by experimenting with capabilities and limitations, as well as how different elements work with one another. I typically combine wood with other contemporary materials such as steel, paint, tape, concrete, clamps, trees, lights, and fiberglass. I primarily use wood because it offers strength, durability, and is aesthetically pleasing in its finished and unfinished state. Wood for me is a natural material that everyone, no matter who or where they are from can relate to. It can be found in home construction, furniture, and in its living state as trees. Each material possesses its own potential and there is no replacement for hands-on engagement to realize these physical properties.

The Sculpture, *Mapping* (Fig 2) is made of Masonite, plywood, 2x4s, steel, and clamps. This work was built by using the Masonite to create a large gesture. I use this line as the fundamental energy that moves the piece. This curling form of Masonite revealed it could not stand alone because it is pliable. Building a wood structure that includes advanced fractal patterns suspends it in space and allowed me to retain its original gesture.

When I'm working with material it becomes a conversation. I speak through the material and it communicates back to me. Giving the material what it needs

allows me to have the most enjoyment in the studio. It becomes an effortless process and a relationship that enhances the material and my connection with it. For me, learning to understand materials and how to work with them to bring out the best qualities or how to construct them cleanly is evidence of a consideration and respect of those materials.

I'm interested in well-crafted and visually pleasing forms that keep the viewer engaged. However, the level of craft needs to be appropriate to the specific piece of work. For example, leaving saw marks on wood can be an interesting contributor to the work that shares its history and hand of the artist. If the material has a natural flaw I'm glad to show it. Likewise, if I make a mistake I'm happy to show it as well, but I look to improve the process on the next work. In Japanese culture, they tend to see these imperfections as beauty. For example, if a ceramic vase chips or cracks they do not hide it, they fill the void with gold. They handle breakage and repair as part of the history of an object, rather than something to disguise. Highlighting the cracks is a way to mark the damage as an event in the life of an object instead of the idea of the object ending at the time of damage. This idea is about non-attachment, acceptance of change and fate as aspects of human life. "Not only is there no attempt to hide the damage, but the repair is literally illuminated... a kind of physical expression of the spirit . . . but carries connotations of fully existing within the moment, of non-attachment, of equanimity amid changing conditions."²

I have found that each material is packed full of its own benefits and inherent conceptual references. For example the use of wood versus steel can reference man-

made versus natural. I typically choose my materials for their visual qualities, durability, structural abilities, and conceptual possibilities. In the work *Mapping* (Fig 3), contrasts of materials are used like steel to wood, angular to round, dark to light, screws to clamps, and curving to straight. These contrasts enhance the characteristics of one another. Clamps can imply the process or transitioning. Clamps are used for temporary holding things in place and ways of connecting two individual pieces together. These clamps also become grounding objects. They are identifiable everyday objects that reorient the viewer with all the movement of lines.

Often I start with an initial mark and then I use repetition of the form to create more complex three dimensional compositions. This creates a rhythm in my work, which I amplify, modulate, and break. *Involution* (Fig. 4) is a visual study of these concerns. It is made of bent laminated poplar wood and acrylic paint. It's composed of two intertwined forms. From the front it reads as raw wood but at an angle it reveals a blue color. This work looks at the basic structures of how to organize line on a wall. Here I'm looking at how line width, repetition, and length effect visual impact; how one versus two forms changes the dialogue.

My work is also inspired by daily experiences. In *assimilation* (Fig. 5), I'm interested in capturing the moment in time of leaves falling. I've experienced these poetic moments many times, where a gust of wind blows and a large amount of leaves fall onto the fresh green grass or other moments when the last leaf or two trickle down softly marking the end of a season. Here I'm not looking to convey this by drawing this idea out through literal representation, but through a mix of the

real and of the abstract. As Paul Klee States, “Not to render the visible, but to render visible.”³ This piece is made of bent laminated poplar wood, acrylic plastic, and tape. I use shape, line, material, repetition, solid, color, and transparency to reference the movement of leaves. This work emphasizes and symbolizes the passing of time and transition from one state to another. Temporality is also implied by the use of (yellow) tape, which is an impermanent material used for holding things together in an intermediate process. I work in abstraction and combine contrasting materials to create ambiguity or an in-between space that the work can exist in. Combining unrelated materials allows for the work to exist where the individual can make their own connections, so they can participate in an imagined experience.

The process of making is a form of human expression and through my building practice and discoveries, these expressive qualities become more available for the viewer to experience. Building work this way keeps the visual presence of the work light and open ended, allowing viewers to discover things in my work as I did. This has led me to explore installation work that adapts to its space and deals with time, transitions, and transformation.

Gormley states “Sculpture wants to be a place, wants to offer us a space for thought and feeling.”⁴ I create spaces where people can be immersed. I utilize this through scale and placement. Placing pieces on the wall that are typically seen on the ground disorients and changes people’s expectations of the space it inhabits. Scale is a way to play with the idea of micro and macro. If someone views the work from far away

then moves closer to experience the details there is a time based experience that happens and when they pull away again they typically see the work different from farther away than they did before. Time based experience allows for a sort of theater to happen as one navigates back to discover new things, questioning what they saw. There is an important relationship here built between the individual and the material space.

Entwine (Fig.6) offers viewers an interactive experience that they can walk through and around. As one moves through the work it is both a symbolic and real experience. This sculpture is meant to accentuate parts of the architecture, both the ordinary and featured aspects. It also aims to have viewers experience the space in new ways they would not without the sculpture. The form undulates out of the center wall bridging the space between the wall and window. (Fig.7) It sweeps across the floor to ceiling windows allowing for a constantly changing form as light moves throughout the day. (Fig.8) On an opposing wall the two forms converge with one another as they go up and behind a wall. This piece moves up and behind the wall to enhancing a small space that is typically overlooked or unnoticed.

In my installation work, I start with an idea of how I want viewers to experience the space. I envision the overall gesture to determine the energy of the work and as the individual parts come together, the small nuances of dynamism and rhythms come about. It's an intuitive process. In *entwine* the energy moves from rhythmic twisting of ribbons on the wall to a fast paced movement along the window that gives it the look over being influenced by the wind itself. The energy is determined by the line quality. A trajectory line versus a looping line conveys a

different sensibility. The trajectory line is a visual of a path followed by a projectile flying, conveying a burst of energy, while the looping line gives the sense of a continuing pattern. The element of line is the fundamental part of this work. Each line has its own unique twist and at times the lines cross, intersect, form clusters, branch out, and support each other. These lines become different actors or participants that move the work forward. The way these lines twist and interact determines the overall form and emotion. Richard Deacon had said something in the spirit of, “how do you change a line or circle in a way so you don’t end up in the same place...you add a twist....it allows the work to wander.”⁵ Within this most recent body of work, each piece is constructed using bendable plywood that is laminated into its own unique shape around a flexible plastic template. These forms are then suspended in space using keyhole wall hangers and metal aircraft cables.

The way I go about connecting these curves becomes a conversation. Each piece I place I want it to look and feel resolved. I achieved this harmonizing each new piece with the one before. If it has positive movement and expanded on the flow and direction of the work I utilized it. Part of my strategy was to cover the ends of the sections of wood. So with each new piece I set in place there was another new end to cover. It was this back and forth that this work was built on. This approach allowed for a visual fluidity.

The meaning I find is during the process of making. In this work I do not draw necessarily one meaning but want it to be open-ended and allow viewers to have their own interpretations. However, within these works I’m thinking of how nature develops

and the gesture in which it inhabits the environment. As viewers move through the work the perception of the work changes. I build this work to appeal to a broad audience so depending on one's own interest my work may be visually pleasing and enlightening. The aim with these forms is to build something new that is adaptable and creates a positive flow and rhythm that invites viewers and encourages giving the viewers a sense of awe and wonder through scale, light, and movement to bring us back to our connection with something larger than ourselves, our connection with nature and where we fit within it. It's a way to share and promote my love for sculpture.

Much of my studio practice influences work I do in the public setting and vice versa. *Grid* (Fig. 9) is a piece I did as part of the ROW project. ROW is a grassroots initiative designed to provide opportunities for physical, human, and economic development. It's about helping neighbors strengthen waterways, and in turn, helping waterways strengthen neighborhoods. In this work I incorporated many new technologies such as plasma cutting metal with computer modeling programs. This piece is made of quarter inch, cold rolled steel with a white powder coated finish. The inspiration for this work was the interaction of people along the Pogue's run trail. Here, the vertical lines that are different shapes symbolize people. The horizontal forms symbolize the growth and movement of the waterways and trails overtime. The horizontal pieces directly reference the trail itself. This work is installed at Spades Park. The open circle in the center of the work depicts the area where Spades Park and the trail intersect creating a symbolic representation of the experience of being at the park by looking through or climbing through the circle as well as framing the view of the library.

Overall, I explore materials to investigate the new. Its intuition and belief that push my work to its limits and possibilities while exploring the unknown. My recent work investigates the intersections and boundaries between painting and sculpture. This work exists on the wall, but maintains a visual and physical connection to the space occupied by the viewer. Compositionally the ribbon-like forms use repetition as a method of expressing movement and the passage of time. The modular nature of these pieces allows them to be reinstalled in different configurations that respond to each new space they occupy. I see this method of working as something similar to gestural painting in abstract expressionism. I see these works as organic responses to the spaces my work inhabits. I draw from my personal experience working with bonsai, imagining the qualities of each space influencing the growth and composition these sculptural forms take. These sculptures are conscious of the environment and accentuate the positive aspects of the location that they dwell, creating a space that encourage engagement and participant interaction. They connect people to the space and to one another to promote activity and a sense of place.

Citations

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Figure 1



Figure 2

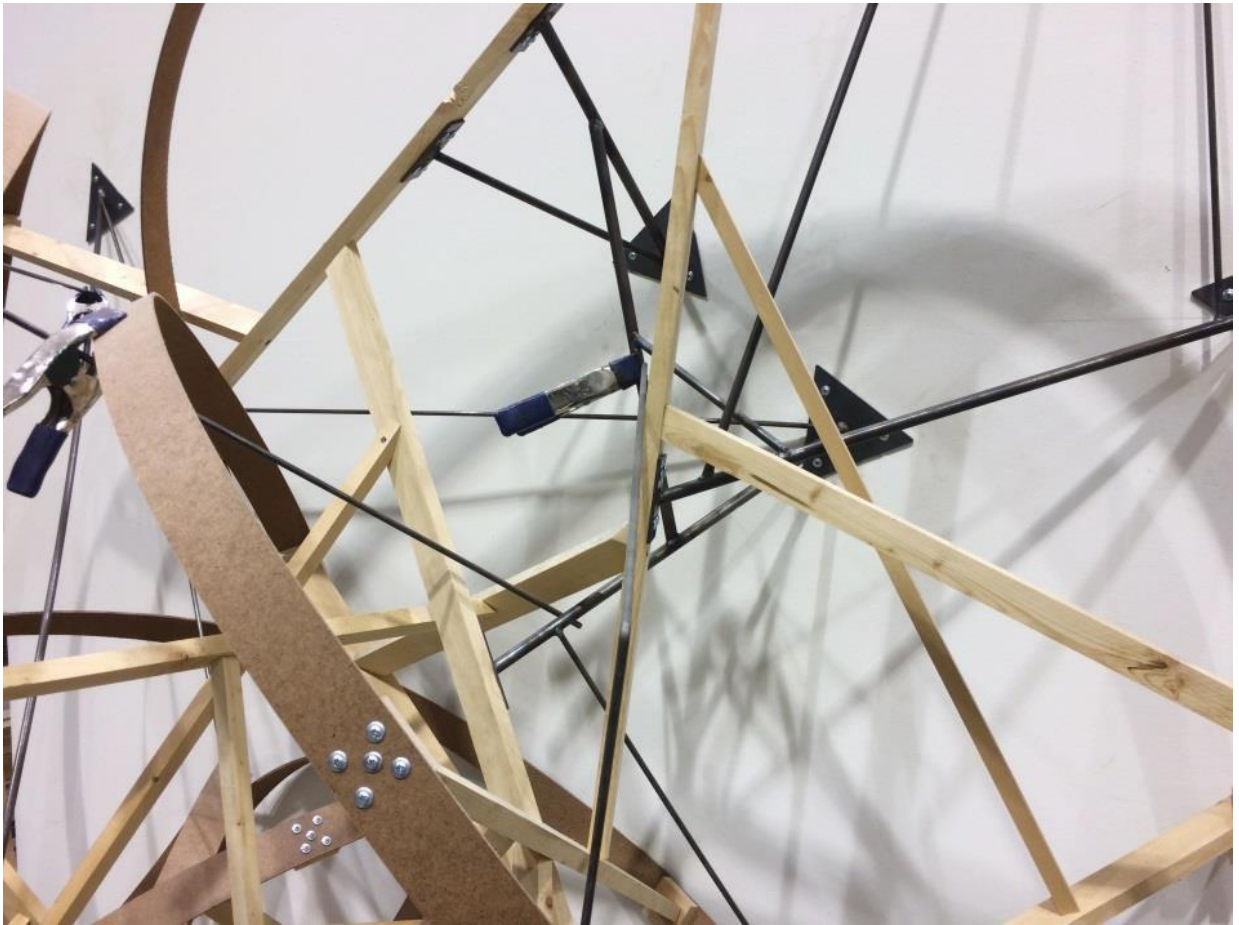


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9